

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Second mosquito pool tests positive for West Nile Virus

BLOOMINGTON – The McLean County Health Department has received notification that a second mosquito pool from the 61705 zip code has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) this week. On August 19, three indicators of WNV activity in the county were reported by the health department after a human case was determined to be a probable case of WNV, and both a bird and a mosquito pool tested positive for the virus.

WNV generally appears and grows in Illinois bird and mosquito populations before it is transmitted to humans. This second report of WNV in the 61705 zip code area indicates a continued presence of WNV and an increased risk of possible human infection. Residents are strongly encouraged to protect themselves from mosquito bites, limit time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn, and take steps to eliminate mosquito breeding areas around homes.

Preventative steps residents can take to reduce their risk of WNV infection include:

REDUCE exposure:

- ✓ wear protective clothing like long pants and long-sleeved shirts, along with socks and shoes, when outside from dusk until dawn (the time when the Culex mosquito is most active)
- ✓ repair and replace worn or torn screens on doors and windows
- ✓ eliminate stagnant, shallow water weekly to prevent mosquitoes from breeding (including bird baths, flower pots, wading pools, old tires and other receptacles that collect water)

REPEL mosquitoes:

- ✓ apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picardin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus, according to label instructions (consult a physician before using repellents on infants)

REPORT dead birds and standing water sources:

- ✓ contact the MCHD to report dead birds and areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may create ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes

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As reported in the *West Nile Virus Environmental Surveillance Weekly Update* from the Illinois Department of Public Health posted August 24th, McLean County is one of 41 counties in Illinois with confirmed WNV activity and there have been 1,441 positive mosquito pool samples, 18 positive birds, and 5 reported human cases of WNV.

WNV human infection occurs primarily in midsummer to early fall, although mosquitoes that can carry the disease may be present from mid-April through October. MCHD surveillance of mosquitoes and birds for WNV infection began in May and will continue throughout the summer to assess the level of immediate risk to humans. MCHD Environmental Health Division has three sites throughout McLean County with mosquito traps that are collected and tested twice a week.

McLean County residents who find a dead bird on their property should:

1. Contact the Environmental Health Division at (309) 888-5482. The department will only collect and test a limited number of birds. Birds eligible for testing must be dead for no longer than 24 hours and have no obvious signs of trauma. Those submitting bird specimens will receive further instructions at the time of the call.
2. To dispose of a dead bird that the health department cannot accept, adults should use gloves or tongs to place the dead bird inside two plastic bags. Residents living within municipal limits should place the bird in the trash. Rural residents who decide to bury the bird should assure that the location is safely away from water sources. Never handle a dead bird with bare hands, and always wash hands with soap and warm water after disposal.

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. Culex mosquitoes, also known as the house mosquito, become infected with the virus by feeding on infected birds and produce more WNV-positive mosquitoes. Those mosquitoes then seek blood meals and subsequently infect humans and animals.

Mild cases of WNV can cause a slight fever or headache. Severe infections can lead to high fever, disorientation, and even paralysis or death. Persons at highest risk for serious illness are young children, adults 50 years of age or older and people with compromised immune systems. Anyone concerned about their risk or experiencing symptoms should contact a physician immediately and inform the doctor of any recent mosquito bites.

WNV surveillance and prevention efforts in McLean County are funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health. For more information about WNV and other mosquito-borne illnesses, visit the health department's website at <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/490/Mosquito-Borne-Illnesses>.

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